

A Study of Factors Critical to Determining the Need for a Joint Vocational High School District in Mohave and La Paz Counties

This study was conducted to help determine the need for a Joint Technological Education District (JTED) in Mohave and La Paz Counties. Considered are community demographics, growth projections, economic forecasts, the educational offerings of each of the high schools and community colleges, the needs of special populations, postsecondary statistics and an analysis of the type of educational offerings that will be required to meet the future needs of our communities and our students.

Mohave County and La Paz Counties – An Overview

The Mohave and La Paz Counties encompass the northwest corner of Arizona. The region boasts over 1,000 miles of shoreline and is a great water sports center. This area has the longest stretch of historic Route 66, as well as two interstate highways. The population is centered in the communities of Kingman, Bullhead City, Lake Havasu City, Colorado City, Quartzsite and Parker. Each of these communities is pro-growth and reflects the modernization and globalization of the state.

The Colorado River, the man-made lakes, Lake Mohave and Lake Havasu, and the Parker Strip play an important role in the economy of the region. Tourism and recreation are big business for Mohave/La Paz Counties. Government, recreation service, gaming and manufacturing related jobs continue to grow to support the increasing population of the region. Mohave/La Paz Counties also benefit from employment opportunities across the Colorado River in Laughlin, Nevada; however, these statistics are not part of the employment statistics included in this study.

With a labor force of over 100,000 people, the Mohave/La Paz region continues to be one of the fastest growing areas in Arizona and the United States. The region's population grew by approximately 3.8% in 2007, exceeding the growth rates for both Arizona and the United States.

Although our population is growing rapidly, levels of educational attainment, employment and income are not keeping pace. In 2007, the unemployment rate in the region's most populated Micropolitan Statistical Area, Kingman/Lake Havasu, spiked from 4.6% to over 6%. Less than 10% of our population currently holds a Bachelor's degree and per capita personal income has dipped below 75% of the state average in recent years.¹

Mohave/La Paz Counties are proud of their schools and the accomplishments of their students. These Counties are home to six public high school districts as well as several private and charter schools. Mohave Community College has four campuses in Mohave County, while La Paz County is served by Arizona Western Community College. Northern Arizona University also offers courses on the Mohave Community College campuses, which creates an additional link between secondary and postsecondary education.

¹ Mohave/La Paz Workforce Investment Board's Strategic Two-Year Plan, 2008-2009 – Section III - Appendix A.

Growth Projections

Mohave County has experienced rapid growth over the past ten years and was ranked fifth in population size in 2006. The county population grew by 5.5% in 2006 exceeding the Arizona growth rate of 3.7% according to the Arizona Department of Economic Security. This trend is expected to continue. La Paz County's growth has been more gradual with only a 0.3% increase in population in 2006. It is the second smallest county in Arizona and has the lowest population density in Arizona.²

City	1990	2000	2006
Bullhead City	21,951	33,769	40,225
Kingman City	12,722	20,069	27,271
Lake Havasu City	24,363	41,938	56,355
Parker City	2,897	3,140	3,200
TOTAL	61,933	98,919	127,051

**US Census Bureau – Appendix E*

Area High Schools

School	Enrollment
Kingman High School	2164
Lake Havasu High School	1889
Mohave High School	1506
Parker High School	579
River Valley High School	965
Total	7103

With the population of the region pointing towards continued growth, it is critical that the area schools accommodate and plan for the future. It is important to keep pace with larger city offerings and to prepare our students for a global economy. The proposed JTED is one step towards achieving these goals.

Each high school resolving to form the Western Arizona Vocational Education District (WAVE) has multiple Career and Technical Education programs as follows:

Kingman High School – 12 programs
 Lake Havasu High School – 12 programs
 Mohave High School – 14 programs
 Parker High School – 4 programs
 River Valley High School – 10 programs

Appendix B contains a complete list of the region's high school programs.

² Mohave/La Paz Workforce Investment Board's Strategic Two-Year Plan, 2008-2009 – Section III - Appendix A.

Area Plans for Economic Development: A Joint Process

In recent years, efforts to help prepare for the future and to enhance our communities has taken on the flavor of collaborations. Teams involving Mohave and La Paz County government agencies, business, labor, education, economic development, chambers of commerce, and citizens have come together to provide the information and action plans essential for a sound economic future. This process of joining together for a common cause is a theme that is working well in the region.

One example of this is the Mohave/La Paz Workforce Investment Board (LWIB), whose Vision is:

“A recognized leader creating dynamic partnerships for employment training, education, and economic development in all our communities through collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.”³

The LWIB provides oversight and direction for the Arizona Workforce Connection’s One-Stop System of business and employment programs throughout Mohave and La Paz Counties. Private and public sector leaders join forces to promote effective and efficient workforce development programs and services to customers. The LWIB has submitted a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) grant, which was selected as the finalist for submission by the Arizona Department of Commerce to the Federal Government.

Another example is the Mohave/La Paz Youth Council, which provides special expertise and oversight to the development of effective youth employment strategies. Successful endeavors of the Youth Council include the Workkeys Certificate Program and the Coalition Youth Team (COYOTE) program. The Workkeys program represents a national benchmark of workforce performance with respect to occupational skill levels. The COYOTE program sponsors public-private partnerships designed to leverage resources to create and enrich opportunities for youth employment and development.

Economic Forecast and Analysis

In 2007, the LWIB completed its Strategic Two-Year Mohave/La Paz Workforce Investment Plan for 2008-2009, taking a close look at the employment and training needs of Mohave and La Paz Counties. Based on this study the most critical industries to the region are healthcare, construction, tourism/hospitality, manufacturing, government and education.

The study also reports Arizona Department of Economic Security’s ranking of occupational areas in Mohave and La Paz Counties (requiring less than a Bachelor’s Degree) based on weighted averages of openings, wages, skills, growth and turnover. The rankings provide a basis for projecting workforce needs and for targeting educational initiatives and program support.

³ Mohave County – Economic Development Department.
<http://www.co.mohave.az.us/ContentPage.aspx?id=114&cid=191>.

Mohave and La Paz Counties TERM Report

Occupation		Score	Openings	Wages (hourly)	Growth%
1.	Nursing	88.5	123	\$20.16	12.9
2.	Real Estate	75.9	27	\$54.23	17.1
3.	Electrical and Power Transmission Installers	74.9	28	\$15.53	12.5
4.	Finishing Management Building/Construction and Inspection	69.1	148	\$13.12	11.3
5.	Construction Trades, Other	65.8	100	\$13.05	10.8
6.	Business Administration, Management and Operations	64	27	\$23.92	7.3

Other ranked occupational areas are:

7. Ground Transportation
8. Criminal Justice and Corrections
9. Carpenters
10. Plumbing and Related Water Supply Services
11. Business Operations Support and Assistive Services
12. Health and Medical Administrative Services
13. Applied Horticulture/Horticultural Business Services
14. Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Technologies
15. Dental Support Services and Allied Professions
16. General Sales, Merchandising and Related Marketing Operations (NEW)
17. Accounting and Related Services
18. Fire Protection
19. Health Aides/ Attendants/ Orderlies
20. Finance and Financial Management Services
21. Allied Health and Medical Assisting Services
22. Culinary Arts and Related Services
23. Teaching Assistants/ Aides
24. Heavy/Industrial Equipment Maintenance Technology
25. Foods, Nutrition, and Related Services
26. Human Development, Family Studies, and Related Services
27. Mason/Masonry
28. Agricultural Production Operation

The complete report is included as Appendix A.

In 2008, CCBenefits, Inc. created a report for Mohave Community College called the Fastest Growing Occupations in Mohave Community College Service Area. According to this report, two high-demand occupational areas through 2017 will be healthcare and computer analysts. The complete report is included as Appendix C.

Conclusion

As outlined in this study, the need for improved and expanded vocational/technological offerings that are reflective of our current and developing economies has been identified as being a priority by Mohave and La Paz Counties. Report after report suggests that the key to our future lies in effective and relevant education. The mandate for improvements requested in this document is not based entirely on local or area needs and recommendations. Rather, local, state, and national governments recognize and partially support improvements in vocational offerings. Although it may not always appear so, from a political perspective, improved vocational education is becoming one of our highest national priorities.

In light of this concern for the future of our youth in our region and the legal requirements of our special populations, the supports required to accomplish the goals that have been clearly identified over and over again have not been enough. In an effort to secure the resources necessary to expand programs and to make a substantive change in the way business is conducted in the region's schools, the districts voted to develop a JTED.

As demonstrated in this study, the need for a JTED is clear. In examining the state priority programs list, it is apparent that we fall short in scope and relevance to the communities' needs. Our region's districts offer no more than 33% of the state's priority courses, and as little as 9%. The comparison chart of state priority programs versus Mohave/La Paz programs is included as Appendix D.

The proposed WAVE district envisions improving its current programs, implementing additional programs, and increasing student placement in postsecondary education and employment. These goals will be achieved through partnerships with the region's school districts, the LWIB, the Youth Council, local business and industry, citizens, Mohave Community College, Northern Arizona University, and other local and regional partnerships.

In closing, if our schools are to improve as we have envisioned, then the formation of a joint technological education district will allow our school districts to be progressive.